1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

In reality, social stratification in Chinese society was not entirely based on occupational lines. Rich merchants and wealthy landlords were often linked by marriage, retail merchants and middle peasants were socially compatible, the social distinction between a craftsman and a simple peasant was even more difficult to draw, and bureaucrats were often wealthy landlords as well. Thus, if we employ the term social classes to mean the stratification of society on an economic basis, we will find that class lines cut across the traditionally accepted occupation-status classification. 565

However, members of all the occupational groups regarded the possession of land as the true indication of prestige and security. A landless peasant hoped to posses land, a peasant with some land hoped to acquire more, and the wealthiest landlord wished to do likewise. Artisans who had acquired savings would invest them in land. Merchants invariably put excess capital that might have been used for business expansion into land, although often they did not count on income from it as their principal means of support. Bureaucrats were even more preoccupied with owning land concomitant with their rise in officialdom. This is a common phenomenon in any society where other tangible assets for accumulation are lacking. 556

Although the possession of land was a criterion for determining prestige and, to a large extent, the sign of real power, prestige did not always result from wealth and the land-holdings

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

of any one family seldom remained constant for more than two or three generations.[2] These conditions accounted for the lack of a permanent ruling caste in China. There were definite ideals in traditional Chinese culture which conditioned the upward and downward mobility of the people within the social hierarchy.

B. Social Mobility

1. The family ideal. Large families, especially of the extended type, were the ideal in China.[3] However, in practice the ideal was limited by economic means. Primogeniture in China had been done away with long before the Manchu dynasty (1644-1912). Land was divided equally among sons. After successive div sions, individual holdings became infinitesimally small. This contributed to the decline of the economic status of even the wealthiest families, particularly when land was the sole source of income. On the other hand, because of the existence of extended families and the clan structure, less fortunate members of these groups might be helped by relatives to gain a living or an education. A substantial amount of land was usually allotted to the communal family or clan for

2. Martin Yang, A Chinese Village, New York, 1945, p. 132; Francis Hsu, Under the Ancestors' Shadow, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948, p. 4.

3. Consult the study of the Family.